

John Dalziel

Imputation of Christ's Suretyship Righteousness

Query: If Christ's Surety-obedience to the perceptive part of the Law is imputed to believers in its infinite value, are not then believers, in Law-reckoning, as righteous as Christ? Is not this, saith the teacher, to set the believer on a level with Christ himself? What more wicked and injurious to the adored Emmanuel? Assertion: This is the very consequence which is managed by the patrons of the papal hierarchy against the Imputation of Christ's Surety Righteousness altogether; a consequence also very much improved by the Neonomians against the same orthodox doctrine, and also by the Arminians, particularly by John Goodwin, in his scandalous treatise on Justification. This being matter of fact, no honor can rebound to this querist, in managing such a weapon, considering the Armory to which it belongs. What then can he intend by digging up this stale artifice, which has been exploded as a mere fraud in all ages? Can he expect to carry the cause of his new Gospel by this craft? No, no. For, it will readily be granted, that believers, in Law-reckoning, are not as righteous as Christ in the Essential Perfection of his Person. The Surety, and the principal debtor, are not one physically, but legally and juridically. It is not the essential Righteousness of the Son of God, the moral perfections of his nature, which is imputed to believers in their Justification; but it is his Surety Righteousness, his perfect obedience and complete satisfaction to Law and Justice. The believing receiver of the Surety-righteousness is not, in Law-reckoning, the author and finisher of it, not his own Savior and Redeemer, not subjectively righteous like Christ, or in point of inhesion, {condition of being,} but objectively righteous, or in point of Imputation. In the act of Justification, the Surety obedience of the person God-man is not transfused into us, so as to be made inherently and subjectively ours; but it is placed to our account, ours in Law estimation. The Justification of the sinner being a relative change, a change of state, not a change of nature; the Righteousness of the Law is not fulfilled in us formally, subjectively, inherently and personally, but rather imputatively. Thus, it is not in us as a Righteousness inherent, but upon us as a robe or garment, and so can in no way metamorphose the nature of the object to whom it is imputed, as the authors consequence would insinuate. Thus, in Law verdict and estimation, our Lord Jesus Christ is righteous as the Son of God in our nature, righteous as a Surety Representative, as the glorious Head of the mystical body, as the one only Mediator between God and man, as the Savior and Redeemer of an elect world; wherefore believers are not, in Law-reckoning, in this sense, righteous; for the Law's judgment being always according to Truth, can never confound the believing receiver of the Surety-righteousness with the Author and Finisher of it. That, then, believers are as righteous as Christ himself in respect to the Essential Perfection of his Person is a position that must be rejected; but, will this teacher refuse, that believers, in Law-reckoning, are as righteous as Christ himself in Law estimation and in truth? If this is his sentiment, I must dissent from it, upon the following considerations. 1. It counteracts the express testimony of Heaven, which is sufficient to overthrow it. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." {I Jn.3:7} 2. If Jesus Christ and believers, the cautioner and principal debtor, are one in Law-reckoning, then there can be no separating of them, in Law, in point of life

and death. Hence says our Lord, "because I live, ye shall live also." {Jn.14:19} The Law Covenant can have no action, no suit, against a justified person, anymore than it can have against his glorious Head; it can lay him no more under an arrest, than it can his Surety Representative who has got up his discharge. {Rom.8:33,34} Thus the principal debtor in the eye of the Law may be said to be as righteous as the Surety without prejudice to the dignity, honor, and preeminence of the Surety. For to be as righteous as Christ in Law verdict and estimation respects not the manner; for the Surety and the debtor are not physically one, but the truth and reality of our being righteous; and if it was nowise injurious to the glorious Surety, that he, and the principal debtor become legally one, then how can it be injurious to Him, that the principal debtor become legally righteous with him? Since, as it is well observed by Mr. Rutherford, concerning the nature of suretyship in his treatise on the Covenant, {part 2, pg. 251,} "though physically the Surety and the debtor be two different men; yet, in Law they are one and the same person, and one and the same legal party, and the same object of justice; whosoever in Law pursueth the Surety, doth also pursue the debtor. The debt and sum is one, not two debts, not two ransoms, not two punishments, not two lives to lose, but one. It is one and the same solution and satisfaction; there cannot, in Law justice, come another reckoning, dying, and payment-asking, after the Surety hath paid. There is one and the same acceptation upon the creditor's part; if he accept of satisfaction in the payment made by the Surety, he cannot but legally accept of the debtor, and cannot pursue him in Law, but must look upon him as no debtor. It is one and the same legal effect. Christ justified in the Spirit, and we in Him, as in the meritorious cause are legally justified." Hence it is evident, that, as the debt of the principal debtor becometh the debt of the Surety, and affecteth him; so also the satisfaction and payment of the Surety, and his discharge and relief, becometh the satisfaction, payment, discharge, and relief of the principal debtor. 3. It is therefore not Antinomianism to affirm that believers are legally righteous in the sight of God, with the selfsame active and passive obedience wherewith Jesus Christ was righteous. This doctrine shines everywhere in the Sacred Oracles with an abundance of evidence. The Neonomians, therefore, in branding it as a doctrine of Antinomianism, are guilty of impeaching a most precious Truth with a most injurious calumny. Why, is not the mystical union between Christ and believers legally sustained at the bar of Law and Justice in so far as, that, upon this union, what Christ did and suffered for them is reckoned in Law as if they had suffered and done it themselves? Are not Christ and believers legally one in point of interest by the mystical union? Inasmuch as Christ becomes one mystical person with them, in finding himself their federal Representative at the bar of Law and Justice, and having the guilt of all their sins imputed to him; so, on the other hand, all that he did and suffered in his obedience to death is imputed to them. The guilt of their transgressions was imputed to him as if he had been personally guilty; and what he did in their Law room and stead is placed to their score, as if done by them; thus having, in Law-reckoning, as really obeyed in Christ, as they disobeyed in Adam, the righteousness of the Law is said to be fulfilled in them. How? Why imputatively, or in point of legal estimation. It is therefore a doctrine that may be admitted as genuine, that believers are as righteous as Christ in Law-reckoning; and what other consequence can follow from the Imputation of our Lord's Surety-obedience to believers in its infinite value? This then, is a doctrine neither wicked, nor injurious to the adored Emmanuel; a doctrine which makes no encroachment upon the preeminence and prerogative of the glorious Head, nor carries in it the least prejudice to any of his precious

truths, but is a part of, and fully consonant to the whole system of Divine Revelation. John Dalziel {The Doctrine of the Unity & Uniformity of Christ's Surety-righteousness in the Imputation thereof to Believers in its Infinite Value, 1760}